(c) Yes, Sir. The Wheel & Axle Unit of Durgapur Steel Plant was upgraded in Nov'93 at a cost of Rs. 143.66 crores under DSP modernisation project.

(d) There are two subsidiaries of SAIL viz. Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) and Maharashtra Elecktrosmelt Limited (MEL). Twin Hearth technology has been introduced in IISCO. At MEL, no technological upgradation has been made or is proposed at present.

Writing off SAIL Loan

4517. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have been actively considering to write off the loans given to SAIL from the Steel Development Fund ;

(b) if so, the total amount of loans Government propose to write off;

(c) the reasons as to why Government propose to write off such Loans to SAIL;

(d) whether Government have ascertained the causes of accumulation of loans with SAIL; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) and (b) Government has approved the waiver of loans along with interest thereon given to SAIL from Steel Development Fund, to a value of Rs. 5073 crore.

(c) The waiver of loans is part of the financial restructuring of SAIL with the objective of improving the financial health of the company and particularly to improve its ability to service debt and raise money for future projects.

(d) and (e) The accumulation of loans was mainly due to market borrowings which were used to fund modernisation of SAIL's steel plants at Durgapur, Rourkela and Bokaro. The total borrowings increased from Rs. 11,272 crores in 1993-94 to Rs. 20,851 crores in 1998-99.

Progress of Steel plant Project in Orissa

4518. SHRI ANANTA SETHI : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether a review has been made on the progress of various works to set up the steel plant at Duburi plant near Jaipur Road in Orissa;

(b) if so, the progress of that plant as on date;

(c) the date by which the project would be completed; and

(d) the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) The review of the progress of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. (NINL) is being done by Project Implementation and review Committee, a Sub-Committee of the Board, every month as well as by the Board almost every quarter. The progress is also being reviewed by the Principal Secretary (Steel & Mines), Government of Orissa every month as well as at the level of Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa. The progress is also being reviewed by the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India from time to time. In addition, the financial Institutions do also monitor the progress of the project.

(b) to (d) NINL is setting up an integrated steel plant with a capacity of 1.1 million tonne per annum for the production of pig iron, steel billets and wire rods. The plant is based on BF-BOF Technology and would comprise of various units for iron making as well as steel making/rolling. The integrated steel plant is being commissioned in phases. As on date, about 75% of work of the first phase of the project for manufacture of Pig Iron has been completed and is slated for commissioning by the end of this year. The work on second phase of the project *i.e.* for steel making is in the initial stage and is expected to be commissioned by the end of next financial year (2001-02).

Strategy For Tapping Rural Maket of SAIL products

4519. SHRI R.S. GAVAI : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Steel Authority of India Ltd. has formulated a strategy to focus towards the vast untapped rural market for its products;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Institute of Rural Management has been appointed as consultant for assessing the rural demand;